

THE
Oxford Methodists :

Being an ACCOUNT of some

YOUNG GENTLEMEN
IN

That CITY, in Derision so called ;

Setting forth their

RISE and DESIGNS.

WITH

Some Occasional REMARKS

ON

A LETTER inserted in *Fog's Journal* of
December 9th, 1732, relating to them.

In a LETTER from a Gentleman near
OXFORD, to his Friend at LONDON.

The SECOND EDITION,
With very great Alterations and Improvements.

To which is prefix'd,

A Short EPISTLE to the Reverend
Mr. WHITEFIELD, A. B. of *Pembroke-*
College, Oxon.

L O N D O N :

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THE

OXLEY'S

Being an Account of some

YOUNG GENTLEMEN

IN

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and their

WISDOM AND

WITH

SOME OTHER

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T O T H E
Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD.

S I R,



HIS little Piece was originally written to vindicate the Gentlemen called by the Name of Methodists, (after an impartial Inquiry into their Principles and Behaviour) from some virulent and groundless Aspersions cast upon them in a Letter inserted in Fog's Journal. And as the Conduct of these Gentlemen has continued ever since irreproachable, and they have stedfastly persever'd in the same Course which they so laudably begun some Years ago ; and yet have still the Misfortune to find themselves slightly spoken of by many Persons who care not to fall into Measures which they may possibly think too strict and self-denying ; it must be thought not improper to reprint it

now. And to whom can it be so fitly address'd, as to You, Sir, who have passed under that Appellation, and who by your successful Preaching have so well justify'd the Conduct of the Gentlemen who are the Subject of it?

It must afford no small Pleasure to all serious Christians, to find, by your Success in the two first Cities of the Kingdom, that, degenerate as the Age is in which we live, a Spirit of Piety and Attention may nevertheless be excited in the Minds of the Generality; and that without any other Novelty, than by preaching the plain and obvious Doctrines of Christianity, in so serious and affecting a Manner, as shall shew the Preacher to be in earnest, and himself affected by the Doctrines which he would instill into others. And from hence there is little Room to doubt, that if the like Method was generally taken by our Brethren of the Clergy, and the Doctrines of the Gospel were not made to give way to the only secondarily necessary Rules of Morality, the like Success would attend their Labours, and the Christian Religion and our sacred Function would be freed from that cold Neglect, to say no worse, which is now too frequently thrown upon both.

*I have heard it rumour'd, that you have been refused by some of our Brethren, the Use of their Pulpits; but as you have submitted
some*

some of your Discourses to the Publick Censure, and as I have not heard it once suggested by the most Invidious, that there is any thing contained in them in the least repugnant to the Doctrines of Christianity in general, or those of the Establish'd Church in particular ; I hope it cannot be true, and must be spread by the Enemies of those particular Clergymen who are named to have given such a Refusal ; and who, surely, have too much Piety and good Sense to be influenc'd, in such a Cause, by Motives of Envy or Narrowness of Mind : For can it be thought possible that Persons who weekly preach, and weekly write, and hourly talk in Defence of our holy Religion, who continually complain of the Infidelity of some, of the Apostacy of others, and of the cold, lifeless, Unconcernedness of most, should be the Persons who would endeavour to throw cold Water on that rising Flame in numerous Audiences, which, well encouraged, might, in time, blaze out in a laudable Zeal for the Gospel of Christ, and be attended with happy Consequences to the Cause of Religion and Virtue ?

But be this as it will, let me exhort you, Sir, not to be discourag'd or dismay'd at any Opposition that you may meet with in your good Designs : But preserving, (in the midst of the dangerous Applauses you meet with from the croud'd Audiences that every where attend your Preaching) that Meekness and
Humi-

Humility, which must be inseparable from the Doctrines you seek to propagate, (and more than any one thing, besides the Blessing of God, insure the Success of your Labours) demonstrate to the World, that you are your self under the happy Influences which you seek to spread; that your Actions are regulated by the Doctrines you preach; and that God's Glory, and the Religion of the Blessed Jesus, are the principal, the only Motives, that animate your Conduct and your Views.

This will intitle you to the Blessing of God, and the Approbation of all good Men; and particularly to the hearty good Wishes of

Your Affectionate,

tho' Unknown Brother,

in our common LORD,

Nov. 28. 1737.

A. B.



T H E
Oxford Methodists.

*In a LETTER from a Gentleman near
OXFORD, to his Friend at LONDON.*

S I R,



H O P E you will not think me to blame, that I have not sooner answer'd yours, wherein you inclosed *Fog's Journal* of the 9th of *December, 1733*, and desir'd me to inform myself, and you, of the Motives, Pretensions, and Actions of the young Gentlemen, there styled METHODISTS. As I was intirely unacquainted with any of them when you made me this Request, it must needs, you ll allow, take up Time, so thoroughly to make one's self Master of this Affair, as to be able to answer the Desire of so good a Friend, and so sincere a Man, as, without Flattery, I may say you are; and so that you may intirely depend upon the Account I should render you, and govern yourself with regard to the Disposition you intend to make of the excellent young Man your Son.

B

T H A T

THAT I might not be deceived, or give you a hasty or rash Account of the Practice or Way of Life of this Society, and as I have Time upon my Hands, I took the following Method: I made a Visit to an intimate Friend, of C — C —, and he brought me acquainted with two or three Gentlemen of M —, who gave me a very dismal Account of the Society, and made me believe, at the best, that the Persons who constitute it, are miserable Enthusiasts, and Zealots; and I found every one almost with whom I discoursed on this Subject, strongly prejudic'd against them. But after all, I could not hear the least Slur cast upon the Morals of the young Gentlemen; only, as the Letter-Writer in *Hog* lays to their Charge, That they pretended to be more religious than their Neighbours; that they put a gloomy and melancholy Face upon Religion, and affected greater Austerities and Exemplariness, than the Doctrines of the Gospel requir'd; and that some call'd them in Derision, *The Holy* or *The Godly Club*, others *The Sacramentarians*, &c. But, as I said, that no one offered to call in Question either their Morals or Integrity.

AFTER I had heard all that could be said against them by their Enemies, I thought it was but fair, to inquire of their Friends what could be said for them: But, alas! so strong were the Prejudices against them, and so general, that I found it no easy Matter to meet with any one that would own the Name:— Whereupon, depending upon the Character which their Enemies gave them, of Probity and Sincerity, I made myself acquainted with one of the Gentlemen, and frankly open'd my Mind to him, and desir'd him to inform me of their Motives and Views, and their particular Inducements to a Singularity of Behaviour and Life, which had subjected them

to

to the Censures of so many Persons of Learning and Capacity. And from the Gentleman's Answer, and the Account he gave me of their Original and Design, I own I was greatly edify'd, and I doubt not, but you will likewise be much pleased. In short, the Account which he gave me was to the following Effect: *viz.*

IN the latter End of the Year 1729, three or four serious young Gentlemen agreed to pass certain Evenings in every Week together, in order to read and observe upon the Classicks, and on *Sunday* upon some Book of Devotion. The following Summer one of these Gentlemen having called at the Gaol out of Curiosity to see a Man condemn'd for killing his Wife, told his Companions, that from the Talk he had had with one of the Debtors there, he verily believed it would do much Good, if a sober Person would now and then take the Trouble to talk to them: That upon his pressing the Matter, two of his Companions walk'd down with him to the Castle; and they were all so well satisfy'd with their Conversation there, that they agreed to go thither once or twice a Week. The Gentleman who propos'd this (who, it seems, is since dead) soon after desir'd one of his Friends to accompany him in a Visit to a poor Woman in the Town, who was taken sick: And finding their Advice well receiv'd, this induc'd them now and then to pass an Hour in such charitable Visits to poor People, who were taken ill: But lest Offence should be given to the Minister of the Parish where such poor People liv'd, they thought it necessary always to apply to such Minister for his Consent and Approbation; and furthermore they apply'd to the Gentleman who had the Care of such of the Prisoners as were under Sentence of Condemnation, and who was Chaplain to the then *Ld. Bp. of Oxford*, for his

Approbation of their Visits to the Prisoners, and of one of the Gentlemens Design of preaching to the Prisoners once a Month, if his Lordship approv'd of it. The Gentleman, for his own Part, approv'd the Design, and undertook that the Bishop would do the same; and soon after signify'd his Lordship's Permission, and hearty Wishes for the good Success of it.

THE Gentleman assur'd me, That they were so diffident of themselves, especially when they found a Spirit of contemptuous Raillery stirr'd up against them on these Occasions, that they took Advice from time to time of a worthy and venerable Gentleman, a near Relation of one of them, who had much Knowledge and Experience of the World, and, that they might have nothing to reproach themselves with, form'd their Conduct upon his Advice; and upon the Encouragement he gave them, they were determin'd at all Events, to persevere in the laudable Course they had begun. He was so kind to shew me his Friend's encouraging Epistles, and oblig'd me with a Transcript of some Passages, which I was the more pleas'd with, as it gave me not only a Testimony of the becoming Modesty of the Gentlemen to submit themselves to the Opinion of a Person of Years and Discretion (which took off from them the Imputation of Conceit and Self-opinion); but as it gave me a high Notion of the Piety and good Sense of the venerable Author. I will give you, Sir, the Transcripts, as I took them. You'll find by the first, that the young Gentlemen had modestly intimated their Apprehensions of making Enemies to themselves by the Course they had enter'd upon; for the old Gentleman says,

“ I AM afraid, lest the main Objection you
 “ make against your going on in the Business
 “ with the Prisoners, may secretly proceed from
 “ Flesh and Blood : For who can harm you, if
 “ you are Followers of that which is so good !
 “ And which will be one of the Marks by which
 “ the Shepherd of *Israel* will know his Sheep at
 “ the Last-day ? And tho’ it were possible for
 “ you to suffer a little in this Cause, you would
 “ have a Confessor’s Reward.—Go on then, in
 “ God’s Name, in that Path to which your Sa-
 “ viour has directed you, and that Track where-
 “ in I have gone before you : For even when I
 “ was an Under-graduate at *Oxford*, I visited
 “ those in the Castle there, and can reflect on it
 “ with great Satisfaction to this Day—Walk
 “ as *prudently* as you can, tho’ not *fearfully*, and
 “ my Heart and Prayers are with you.

“ YOUR first regular Step is to consult with
 “ him (if any such there be) who has a Juris-
 “ diction over the Prisoners; and the next is,
 “ to obtain the Direction and Approbation of
 “ your Bishop.

“ — I bless God who has given you Grace
 “ and Courage to turn the War against the *World*
 “ and the *Devil*, which is the best Way to con-
 “ quer them ; You have but one more Enemy
 “ to combat with, The *Flesh* ; which if you take
 “ Care to subdue, (by Fasting and Prayer) there
 “ will be no more for you to do, but to proceed
 “ steadily in the same Course, and expect the
 “ Crown which fades not away.”

AND to the young Gentlemens Representa-
 tion of the uncharitable Censures and Raillery to
 which they were exposed, the venerable Old
 Man thus writes :

“ —THIS

“ — THIS Evening, in our Course of Read-
 “ ing, I thought I found an Answer to yours,
 “ that would be more proper, than any I myself
 “ could dictate: Tho’ since it will not be easily
 “ translated, I chuse to send it in the Original:
 “ Πολλή μοι καύχησις ἐπὲς ὑμῶν· πεπλήρωμαι τῇ ἀγαλλή-
 “ σι, ὑπερπερισσόμαί τῃ χαρᾷ — What would you
 “ be? Would you be Angels? I question whether
 “ a Mortal can arise to a greater State of Per-
 “ fection, than steadily to do Good, and for that
 “ Reason patiently and meekly to suffer Evil.
 “ For my Part, on the present View of your
 “ Actions and Designs, my daily Prayer is, That
 “ God would keep you *Humble*; and then I am
 “ sure, that if you continue to suffer for Righte-
 “ ousness sake, tho’ it be but in a lower Degree,
 “ the Spirit of Grace and Glory, shall in some
 “ good measure rest upon you. —

“ Be never weary of well-doing. Never look
 “ back; for you know that the Prize and the
 “ Crown are before you! Tho’ I can scarce
 “ think so meanly of you, as that you would be
 “ discourag’d with the Crackling of Thorns un-
 “ der a Pot. Be not *high-minded*; but *fear*.
 “ Preserve an equal Temper of Mind under what-
 “ ever Treatment you meet with from a not very
 “ just or well-natur’d World. Bear no *more Sail*
 “ than is necessary; but steer *steady*. The less
 “ you value yourselves for these Unfashionable
 “ Duties (as there is no such thing as Works of
 “ Supererogation) the more all good and wise
 “ Men will value you, if they see your Actions
 “ are of a Piece: Or, what is infinitely better,
 “ HE by whom Actions and Intentions are
 “ weigh’d, will both accept, esteem, and re-
 “ ward you.”

THIS

THIS, Sir, you'll own, is a noble Strain of Piety, that favours of the Primitive Pattern. If the wise Ones of the World account this Enthusiasm, let me, I pray God, at my last Hour, have no worse Reflection to make upon my past Life and Actions, than will naturally result from having been guilty of such Enthusiasm at this! How happy are these *Sacramentarians*, these *Methodists*, these *Enthusiasts*, as their Enemies call them, to have so very excellent a Director! And how much are they to be commended for submitting their Conduct and Designs to so pious and experienc'd a Judge!

UPON these Encouragements, the young Gentlemen continued to meet together; and the better to confirm themselves in the good Course they had begun, they thought it requisite to *Communicate* at the Cathedral as often as they had Opportunity; which was once a Week: And hence their Ill-willers gave them the Name of *Sacramentarians*. They continued their Services to the poor Prisoners; visited such of their Acquaintance as were sick, and several poor Families besides in Town, and made Collections from the Well-disposed, and among one another, to procure Physick, and other Reliefs to the bodily Necessities, as by their best Advice and Prayers they did to the Spiritual Wants, where needed; and abridg'd themselves of some Diversions and Pleasures, in order to enable them to support the Expence which attended this good Course; and not, as the Gentleman assur'd me, from any melancholy Habit, or Gloominess of Disposition, which this Method had brought them into: For, as he declar'd, Religion is a chearful Thing, and the Satisfaction they reaped from the Sense of having perform'd what they took to be their Duty,

how-

however imperfectly, were greater, and of a higher Nature, than any they had ever before experienc'd. And this, Sir, no one can better account for than yourself, whose Life has been so eminently spent in a regular Course of doing good to all within the Compass of your Knowledge.

THERE are Three Points to which these Gentlemen think themselves oblig'd to adhere, and their Practice of which has brought upon them the Reproaches of all such who have been wrought upon, by more relaxed Principles, or by Misrepresentations of the Views and Actions of this little Society; for a large one, I doubt, considering the Opposition they meet with, and the Depravity of the Age, there is little Room to expect or hope it will ever be.

THE first is, That of Visiting and Relieving the Prisoners and the Sick, and giving away Bibles, Common-Prayer Books, and the Whole Duty of Man, where they find they will be well receiv'd, and explaining the Necessity and Usefulness of those holy Books at all Opportunities, to those to whom they give them; and to the Children of poor Families, they give and explain the Catechism, &c. and now and then for their Encouragement drop a Shilling, or so, where they think it needful and acceptable.

AND, 2^{dly}, In order to confirm and strengthen these good Dispositions in themselves, they find great Comfort and Use, in taking the Opportunities which the Place gives them, as I intimated before, of a weekly Communion.

AND, 3^{dly}, They observe strictly the Fasts of the Church: And this has given Occasion to such as do not approve of them, abusively to call them *Supererogation-Men*.

OBSERVING the Gentleman I talked with, and got these Lights from, to be a very modest and

and ingenuous Man, I threw in his Way two or three Objections to the Method they were in, in respect to the *Singularity* of the Thing, and wish'd their Zeal were not too warm and active, &c. But I found he was very well prepar'd to give solid Answers to what I said, and such as shew'd that their Notions and Principles were better consider'd and digested, than their Ill-willers generally imagine them to be.

He said, They did not conceive that they did any thing that was not requir'd of them by the Duties of the Christian Religion: That the general Disuse of a Duty could not by any Means excuse the Neglect of it. That 'twas true, they met with too many Discouragements, and more than they could have apprehended from the Disinterest-
edness of their Designs; and he enumerated some of them, from several Men of Wit in *Chr-- Ch--* and *M—n*; and that even some Gentlemen, noted for Learning, and in eminent Stations of Life, had descended to forcible Arguments and Menaces, to some of their Members, and had even influenc'd one or two of them, which had been great Matter of Triumph to their gay Opponents: And even that a Meeting of the Officers and Seniors of a certain College had been held to put a Stop to the Progress of *Enthusiasm* in it, as they called it; and that it was given out there-upon, that the *Godly Club* was to be blown up: That all these Discouragements, however, had not at all dishearten'd the rest; and they were no otherwise concerned, than as these Rubs and Contumelies lessen'd the Influences of their good Design, thinking it, as he said, a small Matter to be judg'd by Man's Judgment: That as they conceived the Observation of these Points was their Duty, and requir'd at their Hands, they thought they ought by no Means to dispense with
C them;

them ; but that to such as were not of the same Opinion, and could not be prevail'd upon to think as they did, they preserved all manner of Charity : That they appealed to the Law and to the Testimony, by which he conceived they ought to be judged ; and that if by them they could be proved in an Error, they would willingly retract it ; but if not, that they had not so learn'd Christ, as to renounce any Part of his Service, tho' Men should say all manner of Evil against them, and that with more Industry, and as little Truth, as they have hitherto done : That if the Neglect of known Duties were to be the Condition of securing their Reputation, fare-it-well ; they thought there was no Choice in so unequal a Competition.

BUT, however, he own'd, that they were not altogether so insensible as to be wholly unaffected with the Reproaches of the World, especially as many Reports had been given out of their Customs, &c. which had no Foundation in Truth ; but that they were not concern'd so much for their own Sakes, as for the Obstruction it gave to their good Design. And because the Relation in which the Old Gentleman I mention'd, stood to some of them, should not be thought to have made him partial to their Proceedings, and that they might not seem to rely too much upon their own Judgments, that they had laid open their Motives and Designs, and related the Discouragements they met with, and crav'd the Advice and Direction of a Clergyman as eminent for Wisdom and Integrity, as most private Men in the Three Kingdoms. As the Answer of this worthy Gentleman, who is no other, than the very Reverend — may be particularly affecting to you in the Disposition of your Son, which was so great a Motive to you to put me upon this Inquiry, I obtained a Copy of it, which is as follows, viz.

Good

Good Sir,

“ A pretty while after the Date, yours came
 “ to my Hands. I wav’d my Answer till I had
 “ an Opportunity of consulting who, up-
 “ on all Accounts, is a more proper Judge of
 “ the Affair than I am: But I could never yet
 “ find a fit Occasion for it.

“ As to my own Sense of this Matter, I confess
 “ I cannot but heartily approve that serious and
 “ religious Turn of Mind, which prompts you
 “ and your Associates to those Pious and Chari-
 “ table Offices; and can have no Notion of that
 “ Man’s Sense of Religion, or Concern for the
 “ Honour of the University, that opposes you,
 “ so far as your Design respects the Colleges. I
 “ should be loth to send a Son of mine into any
 “ Seminary, where his conversing with virtuous
 “ young Men, whose profess’d Design of meet-
 “ ing together, at proper Times, was to assist
 “ each other in forming good Resolutions, and
 “ encouraging one another to execute them with
 “ Constancy and Steadiness, was inconsistent
 “ with any receiv’d Maxims, or Rules of Life
 “ among the Members.

“ As to the other Branches of your Design;
 “ as the Town is divided into Parishes, each of
 “ which has its proper Incumbent; and as there
 “ is probably an Ecclesiastic who has the Charge
 “ of the Prisoners, Prudence may direct you to
 “ consult them: For tho’ I dare not say you
 “ would be too officious, should you of your own
 “ mere Motion seek out the Persons that want
 “ your Instructions, or charitable Contributions;
 “ yet, should you have the Concurrence of their
 “ proper Pastor, those good Offices would be
 “ less liable to Censure.”

I WAS agreeably surpriz'd at the Circumspection wherewith these young Gentlemen had proceeded, in this Affair, and was the more pleased with their Design, as I found it a deliberate Thing, and not the rash Effect of intemperate Zeal, youthful Fire, or Self-conceit, which might have push'd some Persons on to pursue these Methods upon false or inconsiderate Motives. And the young Gentleman acquainted me, That what had made them think it more necessary to submit to the Advice of such as they had Reason to think much wiser than themselves, was, the Anger that a worthy Gentleman conceiv'd at his Son, who was the chief Promoter of their Design, having writ to him in the following Terms—

“ You can't conceive what a Noise that *Ridiculous* Society, that you have engag'd in, has made here. Besides the Particulars of the great Follies of it at *Oxford*, which, to my great Concern, I have often heard repeated, it gave me sensible Trouble to hear that you were noted for going into the Villages about *Holt*, entring into poor Peoples Houses, calling their Children together, teaching them their Prayers and Catechism, and giving them a Shilling at your Departure.”

OUR Society, said the young Gentleman, might easily have borne the Reproach of being accounted Ridiculous for a Practice so laudable and inoffensive as this, had it not been the Sentiment of a worthy Gentleman, the Father of a Person greatly respected by us both for his own, and his Son's sake : But it behov'd us, continued he, to proceed in the most wary and prudent Manner, when, join'd to an Authority so venerable as his own, he added as follows in his Letter :

Letter: " I could not, says he, but advise with
 " a wise, learned and pious Clergyman. He told
 " me, that he had known the worst of Confe-
 " quences arise from such *blind Zeal*, and plainly
 " satisfy'd me, that it was a thorow Mistake of
 " true Piety and Religion. — He concluded
 " with saying, that you was young, as yet ; and
 " that your Judgment was not come to its Ma-
 " turity : But that, as your Judgment improv'd,
 " and on the good Advice of a true Friend, you
 " would see the Error of the Way you was in,
 " and think (as he does) that you may walk up-
 " rightly, and safely, without endeavouring to
 " out do all the good Bishops, Clergy, and other
 " pious good Men of the present and past Ages."

You see, Sir, said he, when he read me this,
 we have no great Merit to attribute to ourselves
 on the Score of our Circumspection, which was in
 a manner forc'd upon us by the united Censures of
 two so considerable Persons, and that soon after
 our setting out. He told me, with great Concern,
 and mingled Resignation, That it had pleased
 God to deprive them of the Gentleman to whom
 this Letter was directed, and who was the
 Original of their Design ; and spoke with great
 Honour of him, and Humility of themselves ;
 wishing, that they were as deserving as he, of
 some of those Titles that were, tho' in Raillery,
 bestow'd upon them ; and they should be well
 content, he said, that their Life too should be
 counted Madness, and their End thought to be
 without Honour : But the Truth is, continu'd
 he, our Title to Holiness stands upon much less
 stable Foundations, as you will perceive when
 you reflect upon the Ground of this wonderful
 Outcry, which I have made you acquainted
 with, and which we are far from thinking comes
 up to our Duty, much less intitles us to reckon
 upon

upon as Works of Supererogation, as our Opponents lay at our Door.

I TOLD him, That the World might perhaps have conceived the greater Prejudice against them, for want of knowing what he had so kindly acquainted me with ; and that I thought they should, in order to remove Objections, and the Occasion of Ill-will, condescend to set forth their Designs and Motives to some of their most Learned and Candid Opponents, who being once set right, might influence others to think as favourably of them and their Conduct, as I did.

He said, They had not been wanting in this ; for that, when they found the Clamour increase against them, that they might shew what little Ground there was for it, they thought it proper to propose to their Friends, and Opponents, equally, as they had Opportunity, these, or the like Questions ; which I got him to give me in Writing, as they explain their Conduct, and the Reasons of it, more particularly than has been hitherto mentioned.

I. Whether it does not concern all Men, of all Conditions, to imitate Him, as much as they can, who went about doing Good ?

Whether all Christians are not concern'd in that Command, While we have Time, let us do Good unto all Men ?

Whether we shall not be the more happy hereafter, the more Good we do now ?

Whether we can be happy at all hereafter, unless we have, according to our Power, Fed the Hungry, Cloathed the Naked, Visited those that are Sick, and in Prison, and made all those Actions subservient to a higher Purpose, even the saving of Souls from Death ?

Whether

Whether it be not our bounden Duty, always to remember, that He did more for us, than we can do for Him, who assures us, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me?

II. *Whether, upon these Considerations, we may not try to do Good to our Acquaintance? In particular,*

Whether we may not try to convince them of the Necessity of being Christians?

Whether of the Consequent Necessity of being Scholars?

Whether of the Necessity of Method and Industry, in order to either Learning or Virtue?

Whether we may not try to persuade them to Confirm, and Increase their Industry, by Communicating, as often as they can?

Whether we may not mention to them the Authors, whom we conceive to have writ best on these Subjects?

Whether we may not assist them, as we are able, from Time to Time, to form Resolutions upon what they read in these Authors, and to execute them with Steadiness and Perseverance?

III. *Whether, upon the Considerations above-mention'd, we may not try to do Good to them that are hungry, naked, or sick? In particular,*

Whether, if we know any necessitous Family, we may not give them a little Food, Cloaths, or Physic, as they most want?

Whether we may not give them, if they can read, a Bible, Common Prayer-book, and Whole Duty of Man?

Whether we may not, now and then, inquire how they have us'd them; explain what they don't understand; and enforce what they do?

Whether

*Whether we may not enforce upon them more-
especially, the Necessity of Private Prayer, and of
the Necessity of frequenting the Church, and the
Sacrament ?*

*Whether we may not contribute, what little we
are able, toward having their Children cloath'd,
and taught to read ?*

*Whether we may not take care, that they be
taught their Catechism, and short Prayers for
Morning and Evening ?*

*Lastly, Whether, upon the Considerations above-
mention'd, we may not try to do Good to those that
are in Prison ? In particular,*

*Whether we may not release such well-dispos'd
Persons as remain in Prison for small Sums ?*

*Whether we may not lend small Sums to those
that are of any Trade, that they may procure them-
selves Tools and Materials to work with ?*

*Whether we may not give those, who appear to
want it most, a little Money, or Cloaths, or Physic ?*

*Whether we may not supply, as many as are
serious enough to read them, with a Bible, and
The Whole Duty of Man ?*

*Whether we may not, as we have Opportunity,
explain and enforce them, especially with regard to
Publick and Private Prayer, and the Sacrament ?*

HE said, They never met with any Person
who answer'd any of these Questions in the Ne-
gative : But that they found several, who on this
Explanation, and Expostulations thereupon, in-
creased their little Stock of Money for the Pri-
soners, by subscribing somewhat Quarterly to-
wards it. Nor did they find any one who enter-
tain'd the least Doubt of its being lawful to ap-
propriate to this Use that Time and Money,
which might otherwise have been expended on
the

the more fashionable Diversions of the Place : So that, concluded he, the more Persons we propos'd our Design to, the more we were confirm'd in the Belief of its Innocence ; and the more determin'd we were, of consequence, to pursue it, notwithstanding the Ridicule and Derision wherewith we were more and more loaded.

BEING thus abundantly satisfy'd in whatever I desir'd to know relating to these Gentlemen, after having made sincere Acknowledgments for his Frankness and Candour, I left the Gentleman, and the City, not without assuring him of my hearty Prayers for the Success of their pious Designs, and for their Perseverance therein, and prudent Conduct amidst so many Opponents and Gainsayers : Not forgetting to drop a small Largess towards promoting their pious and charitable Design.

GIVE me Leave, Sir, now to make a few Observations on the Premises, and on the Letter in *Fog's Journal*, which gave Occasion to this Inquiry ; which has ended so much to my (as, I doubt not, it will to your) Satisfaction.

As to the first, tho' it cannot be expected that these young Gentlemen should gain any Number to join them, in such an Age as this ; yet if they do nothing but what is strictly their Duty, who shall venture to condemn them ? By the plain Account I have given of their Proceedings, the Truth of which I cannot find disputed by their warmest Opponents at *Oxford*, we perceive them to be well justify'd by the Rules of the Gospel : And if this be the Case, it is no great Credit to the *Persons*, or Compliment to the *Age*, that so great a Number treat them on the foot of Enthusiasts and Zealots. It looks as if the strict Rules of primitive Christianity were remov'd a great way out of Sight, that we are

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not able to behold the least Attempt towards reviving them, without Wonder and Offence. The Letter charges them with observing *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* every Week, as Fasts: But if they observe the *Wednesday* as Matter of Prudence, and the *Friday* as Matter of Duty injoin'd by our own Church, Where is the Offence, where the Crime, where the Cause for all this Clamour? Have they not a Title to act with the same Freedom, in their own Case, as any one has to differ from them, and to be of a contrary Opinion? But what is still more in their Favour, we find by what I have related, that they are not govern'd by Caprice and Whimsy; by their own Opinions and Fancies only: They have submitted their Conduct, and taken the Advice of Men of noted Piety, good Sense, riper Years, and Experience, and have had their Approbation and Prayers too in every material Step they have taken; which is perhaps a Point, that if their Adversaries had known, they would have been a little more sparing of their Reproaches and Raillery, at least of that Part which lays to their Charge Opinion-ary and Singularity. The Knowledge of this, might have made them silent, and *reflect*.

As for the Letter which gave Birth to the Inquiry that has occasion'd these Lines, I will bestow a few Remarks upon it; tho' I am persuaded, that, for the Writer's Sake, it were much better it were intirely forgotten; for I am sorry to say, that it discovers a Want of good Sense, good Manners, and Christian Charity, and shews as much Zeal in a *bad* Cause, as those Gentlemen express in a *good* one.

He compares them to the *Pietists* in *Saxony* and *Switzerland*, and to the *Essenes* among the *Jews*: By this he discovers his Ignorance; and let him (for I have not Room, nor do you want, Sir,

Sir, to be inform'd in this Case) recollect the Rules of those Sectaries, and compare them not with what he says is *thought*, but what he may inform himself *really* is, and what I have related to be these Gentlemens Method, and he will find the vast Disparity between them: He will find, that the *Methodists*, as he calls them, set up no *new Doctrines*, but only endeavour to follow such as they find already laid down in the holy Gospel; no *Rules* but what are conformable to that; and pretend only to govern themselves by *such Methods* as they find prescribed to them in common with *all Christians*, and not which they themselves prescribe and impose on one another, as several new Sects have done with great *Singularity* and *Affectation*. Indeed, thus far perhaps they may be compared to the *Essenes* among the *Jews*; *i. e.* in the *Simplicity* of their *Diet*, and *Regularity* of their *Life*; by which, as *Josephus* witnesses, (*cap. viii. De Bell. Jud.*) it was usual for many of that Sect to attain to an hundred Years of Age. And if it shall please God to give these Gentlemen the Grace to persevere, and the Blessing of so long a Life, they may be a Means of reforming a vicious World; and may rejoice in the Good they have done, perhaps *Half a Century* after most of their *Social* Opponents, the gay Scoffers of the present Generation, are laid low, and forgotten, as if they had never been. But you will agree with me, Sir, that the Letter-writer intended 'em not this fairest Side of the Comparison; but was willing to shew his Reading, tho' at the Expence of his Judgment and his Charity.

“ They avoid, says he, as much as is possible, every Object that may affect them with any pleasant and grateful Sensation.”] I am sorry this ungenerous Writer is unable to judge of the

pleasing and grateful *Sensations* (if one may use so low a Word for so high a Purpose) that arise from the Conscience of having relieved the Miserable : What can inspire a nobler and more exalted Pleasure, than to see, by what is spared from our *Luxury* and *Superfluities*, the *Hungry* fed, the *Sick* relieved, the *Naked* clothed, the *oppressed Mind* chear'd and made glad, the *Prisoner* enlarged, and the Mouths of even the *Profligate* taught to overflow with Praises, and to sing Thanksgivings to that gracious Providence which has put it into the Hearts of these generous Youths to comfort and relieve them, both with regard to Temporals and Spirituals ? Who can hear the lisping Children of the Poor taught to acknowledge the God that made them, and to instruct, by the Repetition, even their abject and untaught Parents in the principal Duties of the Christian Religion, without being affected with Joy and Transport, far exceeding that which results from the short-liv'd Pleasures which this groveling Writer appears to esteem so grateful and pleasing ? — I will venture to affirm, and I am sorry the Letter-writer is unable to judge of it, that there is more true and solid Satisfaction arising to a generous Mind, from the doing a kind and beneficent Action to his Fellow-creatures, that want his Assistance, and languish in the Absence of the common Comforts of Life, than from all that can be found from the most affecting Pleasures of Sense. He knows nothing of the Seraphick Pleasure of having cheared the drooping Spirit, and comforted the desponding Heart ; a Pleasure, which makes the Eye of the generous Man to glisten with Joy, and his enlarged Heart to bound in his Bosom, and overflow in Praises to the Divine Power, which has enabled him to do the Good he rejoices in. —

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How fallſly, how perverſely are ſuch Perſons as theſe call'd *Sons of Sorrow*, and Men who *doom themſelves to an abſurd and perpetual Melancholy* ! Or rather, how much are theſe Scoffers to be pitied, who cannot riſe to a Capacity of comprehending the ecſtatick Pleaſures which hourly fill the Minds of thoſe they ſo raſhly condemn ! and which are inſeparable from the Conſciouſneſs of having done ſome Part of the Duty required of them by the Author of their Being, in Acts of Beneficence to their Fellow-creatures.

He proceeds, “ All *ſocial Entertainments* “ and *Diverſions* are diſapprov'd of.” How can that be, when they themſelves are a *Society* ; and the *Diverſions* and *Entertainments* which they chuſe, are of the nobleſt Nature, and muſt be heighten'd by *Communication* ? But may we venture to judge what the Letter-writer means by *Social Entertainments* and *Diverſions* ? — Are they not thoſe of the *Social Bottle*, and what flows from the Company and Converſation of Perſons of ſuch a ludicrous Turn of Mind as his own ? But let him remember, that every one is not *entertained* or *diverted* alike. One Man may think very meanly of that, which is the higheſt Gratification to another, as this Writer finds in the preſent Caſe. I will answer for it, that theſe Gentlemen think they enjoy all *Social Entertainments* and *Diverſions* in as high a Degree at the leaſt, as the Letter-writer, tho' perhaps they would not care to take 'em at his *Choice*, and 'tis likely could not in his *Company*. — They think it, doubtleſs, a great Pleaſure, to ſave Money from ſuch *Social Entertainments* and *Diverſions* as he ſpeaks of, to beſtow on the much more noble Purpoſes, which the Letter-writer diſapproves, ridicules, and does his utmoſt Endeavour

deavour to disparage, and render ineffectual; and this, without Provocation, for his *Entertainment and Diversion* only. A noble Diversion, truly ! to sport with the Reputation of others, and to ridicule the good Intentions of Persons it would much better become him to endeavour to imitate.

“ AND in endeavouring to avoid Luxury, “ *pursues he*, they not only exclude what is convenient;” that is, what the *Letter-writer* thinks *convenient*; but what these Gentlemen perhaps think *superfluous*: And who is the properest Judge in this Case; *he* for *them*, or *they* for *themselves*? — But if they are *not* superfluous in the Esteem of either, suppose they think they spare what they *can*, and therefore *ought* to do without, for the sake of supplying with *Necessaries* those who are in *actual Want*? ought they, for this, to be made the Subject of licentious Raillery? — “ They not only exclude what is *convenient*, but “ what is *absolutely necessary* for the Support of “ Life.” Absurd Railer ! how then do they live, if they deny themselves what is *absolutely necessary* for the *Support* of Life? — But ’twill be said, this Expression is to be taken with *Allowance*: But shall he be intitled to *Allowance*, who makes *none*, where all manner of *Allowances* are *due*? And where the *best Intention* must, at least, be granted, and *his* acknowledged the *worst*, that of *ridiculing* Acts of *Piety* and *Charity*? — He goes on; — “ Fancying (*as is thought*) that “ Religion was design’d to contradict Nature.” A strange Fancy truly ! That Nature which is averse from all Evil, and inclin’d to all Good, ought to be contradicted ! That the Christian Religion should raise us above it; and make our Nature such, as it came out of the Hands of its Creator. He adds, “ They neglect and voluntarily

“ luntarily afflict their Bodies, and practise several rigorous and superfluous Customs, which God never required of them. All *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* are strictly to be kept as Fasts, and Blood let once a Fortnight to keep down the Carnal Man” (*says this abandon’d Droll*).— But let us proceed with his barbarous and ill-tim’d Levity; and let the Repetition of it make the Scoffer blush, if he be capable of it: “ And at Dinner, they sigh for the Time they are obliged to spend in Eating: Every Morning to rise at Four o’Clock, is suppos’d a Duty; and to employ two Hours a Day in singing of Psalms and Hymns, (*dreadful Charges these, were they true!*) is judg’d as an indispensable Duty requisite to the Being of a Christian. In short, they practise every thing contrary to the Judgment of other Persons, and allow none to have any, but those of their own Sect, which (*says this Round Asserter*) is farthest from it.”— Half this Censure, tho’ from a profess’d Enemy, is real Praise; and the rest is so contrary to Truth, such shameful and low Scurrility, and is so sufficiently contradicted by what I have related, that the farther Notice of it is intirely unnecessary.

THE Pattern which he says they propose to take from *Origen*, and the whole Paragraph thereupon, is too foolish and absurd to merit Observation; but only as it serves to shew what manner of Spirit this Writer is of, and that he has not, if one may judge by *that* and *another* virulent Hint he gives, a Capacity sufficient to qualify him so much as for a tolerable Buffoon. This abominable Hint is a Mark of the most detestable Spirit of Calumny and Detraction that was ever seen; and I would refer it to the Conscience of the Writer, since he can thus stab in the Dark, and dares not

fix his Name to the horrid Scandal, how he would be content to bear this Sort of Usage himself. By such a Spirit as this Man's were the first Opposers of Christianity acted. Their Enemies reported, that the Primitive Christians were guilty of Incests, and the most abominable Pollutions, in their Assemblies: That they kill'd and ate young Infants, &c. And let *both Parts* of the Parallel have due Force; this Detractor's, to that of the *malignant Heathen*; theirs, to the *innocent and stigmatized first Christians*; to which both bear so near a Resemblance.

BUT hear another Instance of the Absurdity and Folly of the Letter-writer: "Some, says he, are apt to ascribe their gloomy and disconsolate Way of Life, to want of Money; thus being deny'd the Enjoyment of those Pleasures they chiefly desire, they are weigh'd down by an habitual Sorrow." Was ever any thing more absurd?— Their gloomy Way of Life, is owing to *want* of Money, and therefore they *throw it away*, (as this Author would be thought to reckon it, in good Books, *Bibles, Catechisms, Whole Duty of Man, &c.*) and give it to the Poor, to the Prisoners, to the Sick, &c. The Matter of Fact is, *First*, They do not think their Way of Life either *disconsolate* or *gloomy*; but as Religion itself, as is before observ'd, is the most chearful thing in the World, both as to Cause and Effects, so they enjoy so happy a Serenity of Mind, that even the undeserved Calumnies of such an Adversary, and the unprovoked Ill-treatment of their more significant Opposers, cannot disturb it; tho', as far as I can find, they would be glad to be otherwise thought of. *Secondly*, They have a constant Enjoyment of those Pleasures they *chiefly desire*, and are under no other Concern, than that they have

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not a Capacity as large as their Inclinations, to do still more Good to those that want it. And, *Thirdly*, They are so far from being *weigh'd down* with an *habitual Sorrow*, that he himself accuses them, in another Place, of bestowing two Hours every Day in singing of Psalms and Hymns to the Almighty ; which, no doubt, if they do, is from a chearful Sense of the Blessings He heaps upon them, and for influencing them by his Divine Grace, to do all the Good which is in their Power. And this, according to this Writer, is to be *weigh'd down by an habitual Sorrow*.

HE thinks ; yes, even this Detractor thinks, it would be too presumptuous to tax their Character with *Hypocrisy* : Tho' he absurdly makes this Concession introduce the vile Insinuation I have hinted at, and which is really too shocking to be repeated.

As to the Character into which he resolves the Matter at last, to wit, of *Enthusiastic Madness*, of *superstitious Scrupulousness*, of *Folly*, &c. that has been taken notice of already in the Course of the Narration, and I shall say nothing to it here. They must be content to tarry for a better Character from such Persons as this Writer, till Time, and their own continu'd good Conduct, and Perseverance in the same laudable Duties, have worn off the Imputation, and given the World a better and juster Opinion of them.

BUT to throw away one Moment more upon this judicious Writer : We find his Charge, in the main, of the same Nature with that of the angry Gentleman above-mention'd to his Son, who makes their Virtues their Faults ; viz.
 “ That the young Gentlemen frequently went
 “ into poor Peoples Houses, call'd their Children
 “ together, instructed them in their Duty to
 “ God, taught them their Prayers and Catechism,
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“ and gave them Money, &c.” This indeed, to our *modern* Christians, who place all Religion, as well as *Prayer*, in a dead Indifference, or, at best, in mere Harmlessness, cannot but seem extremely odd and strange. But to those, who but look into the *Bible*, or have ever dipt into *Cave's Primitive Christianity*, it will, at first Sight, appear plain to a Demonstration, that the *Method* practised by those young Gentlemen, is but a *Revival* of that good old Way which was practised by the best People of the first Ages; or rather, that it is the very same Path, which their great Master has pointed out, to bring them thither; narrow indeed, and streight, but most assuredly tending to Life.

I NEED make no Reflection on the particular *Unseasonableness* of making such an Outcry against [a supposed Excess in] Religion at *this* Time, when the World is running into the very opposite Extreme, of crying down the very Shew and Appearance of it. Can they be Friends to the *Thing* itself, who raise greater Clamours at at *Zeal for Religion* (whatever Indiscretion there may be supposed) than at all the horrid and barefaced Insults of *Blasphemy* and *Profaneness*?

IF we suppose Indiscretion in some Part of these young Mens Conduct; how can it well be otherwise, in the first setting out? Perfection is a Work of Time and Experience. But where might we expect proper Help and Direction for young Beginners, if not at *Oxford*? Surely the Letter-writer could not have contrived a more effectual Way of Exposing that Learned Body, than by referring the Case of these young *Methodists* to Mr. *Fog's* Correction, and to leave the World to suspect there is not Skill or Judgment enough in any of those grave Doctors, and professed Guides of Youth, to rectify

rectify any mistaken Methods (if any) in their Practice, or Devotions.

It is necessary indeed, that *Zeal* should ever be attended with *Knowledge* : So *Religion* speaks of herself ; — *I Wisdom dwell with Prudence*, Prov. viii. 12. This Sentiment also carries in it a double Advice : Not only to *Novices* and *Beginners* in a Religious Course, that they ought to put themselves under the Conduct and Direction of some knowing Guide, but likewise to those who pretend to be Guides, that they should apply their better Skill, not to extinguish the *Zeal* itself, but only correct its Mistake ; — to *make strait Paths for their Feet, lest that which is lame and imperfect be turned out of the Way ; but let it rather be healed.*

WHAT I have related, will shew, that these young Gentlemen have proceeded with great Prudence and Caution, in observing the above Advice, as far as it concerns themselves. I wish I could say the same of their Opponents, or of those rather, whose more immediate Part it is to *pilot* them aright ; and that they would not countenance the Insults cast upon so hopeful a Design, and thereby *break the bruised Reed, and quench the smoking Flax.*

'Tis not to be question'd, but most of the Clamours rais'd against these Gentlemen, are owing to Misapprehension and Misrepresentation. The Duties they practise, and the Good they do, and are inclin'd to do, must proceed from Motives that cannot deserve these Clamours, or to be discountenanc'd or ridicul'd. Bad as the Age is, there are not wanting, blessed be God, even among the Many, enow to admire and applaud, if not so strictly as they ought, to practise, what is laudable in itself, when it appears to be so to them. Were the Rules, by which these young Gentlemen are

acted, known as well to the World, as they are to me, in Virtue of the Inquiry I have made, other Thoughts would be conceived of them by all serious Men, and by such as have not a strong Taint of Scepticism and Infidelity, and are not bad, if one may so say, upon Principle. Let such make an Abstract of the Narration I have given, which I solemnly declare, upon the strictest Examination, I believe to be the Truth, and let them hate or oppose them if they can. They will find the Matter thus come out, (*to sum up briefly what has been already said*) That those Gentlemen think themselves oblig'd in all Particulars, to live up to the Law of the Gospel: That the *Rule* they have set themselves, is not that of their own Inventions, but the *holy Scriptures*, and the *Orders and Injunctions of the Church*; and that, not as they perversely construe and misinterpret them, but as they find them in the *holy Canon*: That, pursuant to these, they have resolv'd to observe with Strictness, all the Duties of the Christian Religion according to their Baptismal Engagements, and particularly the *Fasts*, the *Prayers*, and *Sacraments* of the Church; to receive the blessed Communion as often as *there is Opportunity*; and to do all the Good they can, in visiting the *Sick*, the *Poor*, the *Prisoners*, &c. knowing these to be the great Articles on which they are to be try'd at the Last Day; and in all Things *to keep themselves unspotted from the World*. It would be found, that, if they rise earlier than ordinary, if they are sparing in *Eating* or *Drinking*, or any *expensive Diversions*, 'tis to save *Time* and *Money* for improving those glorious Ends; and not (as is unfairly insinuated) that they make *such Things* to be *Essentials* in Religion, much less out of a *gloomy* and *Pbarisaical* Spirit, to shun the Company, or up-

upbraid the Practice of others. — These are the *Rules*, this the *Method* they have chosen to live by.

LET all the *serious* Part of Mankind, who alone are appeal'd to in this Case, be Judges between them and this Letter-Writer, who has so ludicrously, and, in some Cases, so wilfully misrepresented them. To live by *Rule*, especially a *good Rule*, was ever esteem'd a sure Sign of *Wisdom*: To live by *none*, much more to be against all *Rule and Method*, must be a flagrant Mark of *Folly*. And I will venture to add, That if these young Gentlemen persevere to the End in this *good Method*, they shall receive a *Crown of Glory*.

I HOPE, Sir, you will excuse my Prolixity. You say, you love to receive long *Letters* from me; and I think I have now try'd your Patience sufficiently, and that Indulgence with which you have always favour'd

Your most humble Servant, &c.

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